

Sermon Notes
“The Family”

Material for this message was drawn from a series of sermons by Dr. Calvin Wittman (2009)

Focal Scripture Reference: Ephesians 5:22-25

If I were asked to identify the front lines of the cultural war in the United States of America today, I would have to say that the place where the fiercest fighting is taking place is within the family. At no other time in the history of our nation has the family been under such a coordinated and intentional attack by those who stand in defiant opposition to God's truth.

In the courtrooms, state houses, and legislative bodies of our nation a battle is being waged to redefine what constitutes a family, a marriage, and ultimately what our society will look like in the years to come. Radical activists are pushing an agenda that would legalize and encourage many departures from Biblical standards for the family.

Because of what we are facing, Christians need a clear and accurate biblical view of what God says a family is supposed to be. Article 18 of the Baptist Faith and Message provides such a definition for us.

"God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect and to lead his family.

A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the leadership of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage.

Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents."

With this definition in mind, let's consider four things where the family is concerned: First, the foundations of the family, secondly the definition and sanctity of marriage, third the function of the family, and finally, our proper response to God's truth.

1. The Foundations of the Family

It is important to note that until recently, it was not necessary to define what constitutes a family. Everyone knew what was and what was not a true family. Christians were generally united on what defined a family and American society was sufficiently influenced by a Biblical worldview that there was an understanding that a family consisted of those individuals described in the section of the BF&M that we just read.

However, efforts in recent years to redefine the family show how far our culture has drifted from the truth. It is to that end that we have now found it necessary to define what a family is according to God's word. While modern definitions of what a family is are driven by the ever-changing views of society, as Christians we have a fixed understanding, given to us in God's revelation.

In Genesis 2:23-24 the scripture says, ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (NIV 1984)

This is clear, is it not? God's definition of a marriage is provided to us right here in Genesis Chapter 2. However, because of sinful behaviors and choices, many families today are not what God intends them to be. We cannot allow the family to be redefined simply because so many families fail to meet God's standard.

God's intention for the family begins with the marriage of one man and one woman and is extended to their children, whether they are by blood or by adoption. The bottom line is this: The family unit was designed by God to be the foundational institution in all human society. Destroy the foundation, and you destroy society as a whole. With this in mind, let's see what the scripture says about marriage.

2. The Definition and Sanctity of Marriage

In Hebrews 13:4 God's word says, "Marriage should be honored by all ..."

As Christians, we must stand firm upon the conviction that marriage is to be between one man and one woman. Creation itself gives us this truth. God created one man and one woman. He did not create two men, nor did He create two women, nor did He create one man and four women. God made one man and one woman and this was His design for marriage.

The growing number of unmarried couples who live together is a symptom of the ailing family in America. The likelihood of divorce for those who live together before marriage are more than twice what they are for couples who do not live together. The resulting plague of failed marriages and divorce has ravaged untold households. The number of families headed by single mothers is growing at rate nearly five times that of families headed by a mother and a father.

God also says that marriage is sacred. It is to be between one man and one woman for life. Sadly, many Christians aren't any better at their marriages than are the lost in the world around them. This is because many Christians fail to follow God's instructions on how the family is to function.

3. The Function of the Family

First, we must recognize a husband and a wife are of equal worth before God. However, this does not mean they fulfill the same function within the family. While there is equality of worth, there is diversity of roles. Our society touts the viewpoint that not only are men and woman of equal worth but that no distinction should be made in the roles they should fill. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As New Testament Christians who hold a biblical view, we believe that God defines unmistakable roles for both the man and the woman in marriage and for children as well. We also hold to the position that when a husband and a wife fulfill their Biblical roles, they complement each other within the family. After all, God made woman to complete man, not to compete with Him.

The scriptures give us instruction regarding this in **Ephesians 5:22-25**.

The Bible says this, **“²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ...” (NIV 1984)**

The responsibilities are clear enough. Husbands are to love their wives sacrificially, putting their wife's wellbeing ahead of their own. They are to follow the example of Jesus Christ who loved us so much He laid down all of His rights

and gave Himself for us on the cross. This is how husbands are to love the wives.

Similarly, God's word calls for wives to submit to the leadership of their husbands. Now He does not say that this will always be easy, and He does not say that your husband will always be right. He simply calls wives to submit to their husbands, as unto the Lord.

Frankly, some Christian women are offended by the concept of submitting to their husbands because they have bought into the mindset of today's culture rather than being obedient to the word of God. However, I believe many women find submission to their husbands difficult because their husbands aren't holding up their end of the bargain. A wife will be far more willing to submit to her husband's leadership if she knows he loves her sacrificially and puts her well-being ahead of his own.

Husbands, you should never think that because God has placed you in charge of your family that you have a right to do whatever you please. Even as your family is under your authority, you are under God's authority and He will hold you accountable for how you treat your wife and your children.

We also believe that from the moment of conception, children are a blessing and a heritage from the Lord. Nothing could be more relevant to our culture than this truth. We live in a society where tens of millions of unborn children have been murdered under the lie most call "a choice." We will all answer to God someday for allowing this to happen in our country. Beyond recognizing that children are a gift from God, parents are called to teach their children God's truths, in both word and deed.

And children, God has called you to be obedient to your parents.

Ephesians 6:1-4 says, ¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." ⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (NIV 1984)

To honor your father and your mother means more than simply to obey them; it means to do it with the right attitude. If you obey your parent's with a grudge, you will receive no reward from God. To honor them means to speak to them respectfully and to defer to their judgment. Children, if you belong to Jesus, you must submit yourselves to your parent's authority and obey them, and you must do so with the right attitude.

Fathers and mothers, if you truly love your children be a parent to them, not their friend. Love them, but also lead them, teach them, and discipline them. Children, realize how blessed you are if you have Christian parents who are willing to raise you as well as praise you. While many things in our culture may run contrary to these beliefs, God has called you to be different; He has called you to be salt and light, to be a persevering influence in a decaying culture.

4. Our Response to God's Truth About the Family

As with all truth, God calls us not merely to hear it, but to do it, to employ His truth in our everyday lives. I would suggest three concrete actions we can take.

A. Define It

We must know what God says and be careful to hold to God's definition of family in spite of how the world around us wants to redefine it.

B. Declare It

We are not to be silent, but to be vocal in speaking God's truth to the world in which He has placed us. There are many things we should declare to our culture, but if we fail to speak against those areas where our culture deviates from God's truth, then we have failed to be faithful as salt and light.

C. Demonstrate It

We must be careful to demonstrate to our world that our God is real, the evidence of which can be seen in how we live our lives. When we as Christians fail to practice what we preach the world begins to ignore everything we say or stand for. Again, the scripture tells us that we are to be salt and light in our world.

In **Luke 14:34** it says that salt is good. But it also says that salt that is no longer good is cast out. When we, who have been called to be agents of preservation in society become compromised and diluted to the degree that we lose our effectiveness, the world begins to think of us as fools.

Husbands, what does your family look like today? How does your marriage measure up to God's standard? Are you setting a Godly example for the world and for your children? If not, what better day to set things right.